United Nations S/PV.7519

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7519th meeting

Thursday, 10 September 2015, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Iliichev	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Santa Rosa
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
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	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Thirtieth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2015/620)

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15-27587 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Thirtieth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2015/620)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting. On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Benedict Sannoh, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Republic of Liberia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Sweden.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/620, which contains the thirtieth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous: At this time last year, the situation in Liberia was of deep concern. The country was in the throes of a national tragedy, an unprecedented health emergency that was devastating families and communities, threatened to reverse the political and security gains made since the end of the civil war and risked tearing apart Liberia's fragile social fabric. The Security Council recognized that this health emergency posed a threat to international peace and security. Fortunately, the country has since turned a corner.

The people of Liberia endured the trauma of Ebola with resilience, dignity and a profound determination to overcome. Indeed, their efforts were rewarded: on 3 September, Liberia was again declared Ebola-free by the World Health Organization. I would therefore like to begin my remarks by commending the Minister of Justice and his Government on the leadership provided during the Ebola crisis, and now as the country works toward recovery. I would also take this opportunity to express my profound admiration for the people of Liberia, who galvanized themselves at every level, including at the community level. I also express my appreciation for the Council's mobilization of international support for the countries most severely impacted by Ebola, including Liberia.

Liberia is making progress on a number of fronts, including important momentum on essential political reforms. The Government has launched a deconcentration programme, which is a critical first step in decentralizing the reach of the State — which, for the time being, is concentrated primarily in Monrovia — so that local officials are empowered and citizens throughout the country are able to benefit from the most basic of services.

The constitutional review process has also made progress. Last month, President Johnson-Sirleaf transmitted to the legislature 25 proposed amendments that emerged from that process, along with her recommendations. I note that the President categorically rejected — and suggested that Liberia's elected representatives should also reject —exclusionary provisions such as declaring Liberia a Christian nation and requiring African ancestry for citizenship. Recommendations also include proposed changes that the President supported, such as a shorter term for elected officials, including presidents and legislators.

Meanwhile, litigation related to last December's senatorial elections is nearly completed, with only one appeal still pending. I think that the 2014 electoral process demonstrated many encouraging elements about the independence and maturity of Liberia's democracy, including with respect to the capacity of national institutions to conduct elections throughout the country in circumstances, we recall, that were difficult and with limited means. The subsequent appeal process has demonstrated the continuing commitment of the political class of the country to seeking the resolution of disputes through legal channels.

I turn now to the security situation, which remains generally stable, although public order is still a source of concern, as demonstrated by periodic incidents, for instance, between the police and motorcycle taxi drivers in Monrovia, and some public disturbances at concessions. But I am pleased to note that since the

Secretary-General's report (S/2015/620) was issued on 13 August, there have been no major security incidents.

In the meantime, Liberia is working hard to build its institutions, pass legislation and put in place mechanisms that will enable it to maintain stability without the presence of a peacekeeping force. All but one of Liberia's counties have established a county security council that brings together security actors to share information, provide early warning of risks, and advise national decision-makers. This is an important tool for channelling local-level knowledge and capacities in order to prevent localized disputes from spiralling into larger conflicts. Most recently, the council of Grand Gedeh conducted an assessment of community complaints about the cross-border encroachment on farmland by foreign nationals, with a view to formulating recommendations to mitigate the spread of that dispute.

The Government remains committed to making every effort to mobilize the resources needed to develop its capacity to maintain stability and protect its population independently of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Last week, the President signed into law the 2016-2017 national budget of $622 million, which includes $20 million in resources allocated to the security transition. However, the Government estimates that $37 million are still required for the transition process.

Last week, the joint implementation group — which brings together the Government and its key partners, including UNMIL, which oversees the security transition — agreed to reprioritize tasks and associated costs in order to ensure the effective achievement of key milestones in the transition process. It also agreed to undertake a more robust approach to measuring progress against planed benchmarks and activities. UNMIL and the country team are supporting the establishment of a programme management office for the security transition, which is focused on project implementation, with particular emphasis on fiscal responsibility and timely delivery.

The legislature is also doing its part. It has actually postponed its recess so as to be able to review essential pending draft legislation, including proposed acts for the police and immigration that include important provisions for civilian oversight. However, some important legislation remains pending, including a firearms control bill that the Secretary-General recently flagged as critical in the context of the sanctions regime.

The quadripartite mechanism bringing together UNMIL with its sister mission, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as Liberian and Ivorian officials, resumed in March with a meeting held in Abidjan. However, the formal joint border security operations that were suspended in early 2014 due to concerns about Ebola and concerns that it might spread into Côte d'Ivoire have, regrettably, not yet resumed. Planned meetings of chiefs and elders in the border area, and the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees living in Liberia, especially in the area of Zwedru, are still suspended until after the elections in Côte D'Ivoire in October. In the meantime, UNMIL is working closely with the Mano River Union to implement its security strategy.

In April, the Council decided to resume the progressive drawdown of UNMIL, which had been suspended during the crisis. Since the adoption of resolution 2215 (2015), UNMIL has been reduced by 1,221 troops, reaching this month its new military strength of 3,590 personnel. Additionally, the authorized strength of UNMIL's police component now reflects its actual deployment of 1,515 personnel, including eight formed police units, individual police officers and immigration advisers.

In the report before the Council, the Secretary-General recommends further reductions to military, police and civilian components of UNMIL, taking into account the Council's expectation that the Government of Liberia will be fully responsible for security as of 30 June 2016. The strategic concept that underpins these recommendations is the consolidation of the remaining armed capacity of UNMIL, which would be able to provide rapid response in support of the Liberian security institutions in the event of a serious, sudden deterioration of the security situation.

Specifically, by the conclusion of the security transition in the precise middle of next year, the UNMIL force would be reduced to 1,240 personnel, including one battalion with support and enabling units, especially aviation. The police component would likewise be reduced to 606 personnel, including three formed police units, in addition to police and immigration advisers, as well as prison advisers. It will, however, be important for UNMIL to retain the capacity to provide such support for some months after

the conclusion of the security transition so as to test the capability of Liberian security personnel to protect civilians and respond to security incidents in order to mitigate any risk of reversal.

I should also note that the Secretary-General's new Special Representative for Liberia, Mr. Farid Zarif — whom many here know well — deployed last Monday. He has considerable experience in peacekeeping, particularly in Liberia, and I am sure that he will provide critical leadership at this important period in the Mission's lifecycle.

Liberia is a country that can be characterized by the remarkable ability of its people to overcome seemingly impossible adversity. These are a people who have endured and are still enduring the devastation wrought by more than a century of systematic exclusion, decades of dysfunction, and 14 years of successive, brutal civil wars. For more than a year, the people of Liberia were confronted with a national tragedy that took shape in the form of a medical emergency. And yet, once again, the country has turned a corner and transcended adversity. Thus, there is yet again an opportunityto create a better Liberia.

Now, it is with the people and Government of Liberia that lies the important work of continuing to build a nation — a unified, reconciled nation with a Government that has to be accountable and committed to addressing corruption within its ranks; a nation in which all citizens share the benefits of the country's abundant natural resources; a nation that has to be fully responsible for its own destiny, with institutions and a Government able to provide the basic guarantees of security, protection and services to all its citizens.

The decision taken by the Council to set 30 June 2016 as the date for the full assumption of security responsibilities by national authorities is, I believe, a remarkable demonstration of confidence that the country has overcome both the instability and the dependency of the past, and that it is moving steadfastly in the direction of building a viable, united and fully independent nation. We shall continue to support the people and the Government of Liberia in that endeavour, with the hard-won stability enduring for all of the succeeding generations of the country.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to address the Council this morning on behalf of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). I wish also to thank Under-Secretary General Ladsous for his very pertinent briefing this morning.

First, I, too, wish to congratulate Liberia on having been declared Ebola-free last week by the World Health Organization. The Peacebuilding Commission has been very impressed by the steadfast determination of the Liberian people and the Government, represented here by the Minister, to fight the disease, and I am heartened by the fact that full attention can now be geared towards recovery. As we have continuously stressed, peacebuilding must form part and parcel of rebuilding after the Ebola crisis. The crisis exposed gaps in the peacebuilding and State-building efforts made to date, including in the area of building trust between citizens and the State, and with regard to strengthening the social fabric. The economic downturn that followed after the Ebola crisis must be met with increased support from the international community for revitalizing socioeconomic development.

Let me turn to the main focus of today's briefing: the continued drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the handing over of security and stability tasks to the national authorities at the conclusion of the security transition, by 30 June 2016. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report (S/2015/620), the assumption of responsibility for security in the country by the Government of Liberia will be an important milestone in post-conflict Liberia and a demonstration of confidence that the country has turned the corner from conflict, as Mr. Ladsous just pointed out.

In this regard, the leadership of and ownership by the Liberian Government will be absolutely essential as the national authorities prepare to take over. The international community will, of course, have to maintain an important role in supporting and accompanying Liberia in this transition phase.

At the same time, it will be important to not only focus attention on what needs to happen until June 2016, but equally so on what needs to follow the conclusion of the security transition. Early and proper planning is needed. Only by identifying longer-term peacebuilding needs can we now jointly ensure that the required capacity and support structures are in place to reinforce national efforts. The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to stress the imperative of greater focus on institutional reforms and capacity-building,

socioeconomic development and the strengthening of the justice sector in the context of consolidating Liberia's peace efforts.

The international community has generated experience and a body of knowledge on United Nations mission transitions, upon which we should now seek to draw. In our view, there are no excuses for not learning from past successes as well as failures. We know that the drawdown of United Nations missions constitutes a defining moment on the path to sustainable peace and development. However, we are still experiencing significant gaps in political attention, as well as in the financing of critical processes, programmes and institutions. We could certainly do better when it comes to transitioning between different modes of United Nations engagement on a general level. In this regard, we are fortunate to have had two recent reviews on how to strengthen peace operations that offer a detailed analysis. The PBC stands ready to learn from these analyses and to do our utmost to provide effective and relevant support to Liberia in its crucial next phase.

The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to act as a convener and to advise and help mobilize resources for Liberia's key longer-term peacebuilding priorities. The Liberia configuration, which I chair, intends to soon host a meeting with all relevant stakeholders involved in peacebuilding efforts with the aim of identifying needs, discussing capacity and potential gaps, and looking at where funding is falling short and where donors could do more. Such a meeting would constitute an opportunity for the Liberian Government to brief on the progress made under its transition plan and for UNMIL to provide an update on the security transition. The meeting will also help shed light on local perspectives of civil-society organizations and grass-roots actors. We hope that these discussions will complement and add to the work undertaken in the joint implementation group in Monrovia, which is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Government's plan for the UNMIL transition. The Commission is ready to share the conclusions of those deliberations with the Council.

In addition, in order to ensure that the Peacebuilding Commission plays a relevant role beyond the transition, the configuration has taken steps towards the revision of its current instruments of engagement with Liberia. The Commission has invited the Secretary-General to make recommendations for a updated framework of engagement for the PBC in view of the security transition. This strategic input by the United Nations system will be critical to enabling the Commission to play an effective role and will help align our support for the efforts made by the operational actors in the field. Those actors include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank.

The key priorities of our current engagement remain valid, namely, reform of the security sector, national reconciliation and the rule of law. The updated instrument is intended to align and bring together existing national plans, including the Agenda for Transformation, the Government's plan for the UNMIL transition and the Ebola recovery plan. The configuration looks forward to engaging with the Liberian Government on updating our framework of engagement, and we will keep the Council informed on this exercise as well.

As Liberia is preparing for the security transition, it is simultaneously grappling with a number of other reforms with a bearing on peace consolidation. The preparations for the elections in 2017, the current constitutional review and the process of decentralization will also remain on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, as these processes will affect fundamental aspects of State- and nation-building. Similarly, implementing the strategic road map for national healing, peacebuilding and reconciliation also remains imperative. We will also try to highlight land issues and their relevance to the crucial area of natural-resource management, not only to ensure reduced tensions between affected communities and concessionaires, but also to help Liberia develop a sustainable source of domestic revenue. Lastly, tackling corruption with continued vigor will be key in order to raise public trust in Government institutions.

In closing, one might say that the value-added of the accompanying role of the Peacebuilding Commission is clearly being tested as a post-conflict country approaches a milestone in its journey towards sustaining peace. Liberia has a challenging year ahead. The Council and bilateral and multilateral partners have accumulated experience and knowledge that we must continue to deploy in support of Liberia's own efforts to consolidate peace. The Commission that I chair stands ready to contribute to all these efforts focused on national priorities and sustained peace.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to Mr. Sannoh.

Mr. Sannoh (Liberia): It is an honour and a privilege for me to address the Council as it considers the thirtieth progress report of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) (S/2015/620).

On 3 September 2015, Liberia was declared Ebola-free for the second time by the World Health Organization. Although this would not have been possible without the strong leadership of our President, Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and the resilience of the people of Liberia, we owe a debt of gratitude to the United Nations and our international partners for walking along with us to cross this bridge. It has been a difficult road for us as a people and a nation. The steep decline in the economy due to the Ebola crisis remains the greatest challenge to our nation, and the reverberations of that decline will continue to have an impact on all sectors of the Government, especially the justice and security sectors.

Permit me therefore to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, members of the Council, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Liberia configuration, as well as our bilateral and other multilateral partners, for their invaluable support, which enabled us to contain the Ebola scourge.

The Secretary-General has noted in his report (S/2015/620) that the assumption of security responsibilities for UNMIL will mark a historic moment in post-conflict Liberia, whereby the fate of the country and the protection of its citizens will, for the first time in more than a decade, be completely in the hands of the national authorities. I agree fully with the Secretary-General that this will be an important turning point in our nation's history. The Government is doing everything possible to make this a reality.

As Council members may be aware, the plan for Liberia to assume this responsibility has five strategic objectives. The first objective is to fill immediate security gaps created by the UNMIL drawdown throughout the country. The second objective is to strengthen response capacity in threat-prone regions of the country. The third objective is to simultaneously pursue all normal conventional security operations throughout the country. The fourth objective is to reform the legal frameworks of the sector agencies. The fifth objective is to build the capacity of the sector. Significant progress has been made towards the achievement of these objectives.

In close collaboration with our partners, the Government now has a clear road map, especially with regard to the structural and implementation arrangements of the plan. The Government has disaggregated the plan. The priority activities for implementation between now and June 2016 have been identified and costed with timelines. They include those responsibilities that the Government is to take over from UNMIL and those challenges that pose immediate threats to the consolidation of peace. The total budget for these activities is $38.8 million. Against this amount, the Government of Liberia has allocated $20 million in its 2015-2016 budget, and 50 per cent of this amount is to be deposited in a dedicated trust account to enhance timely disbursement and rapid implementation. With the support of the United Nations Development Programme, a transition implementation unit has been established within the Ministry of Justice to coordinate the various activities of the plan.

With respect to the legal framework, in July 2015, the Legislature opened public consultation on a draft firearms act. A draft police act and a draft bureau of immigration and naturalization act have been drawn up, approved by the Cabinet and the National Security Council, and forwarded to the Legislature for enactment. On Monday, 8 September, these draft bills had their first reading in the legislature. Work is also currently in progress on a draft alien and nationality law. These reforms will lead, inter alia, to a strong, coherent and modern legal framework for the justice sector, improving civilian and democratic oversight of the sector's governance system, reducing inter-agency overlapping of functions, professionalizing the sector's management systems and ensuring accountability and efficiency.

Progress is also being made in the area of training. On Saturday, 12 September, the Bureau of Immigration and the Liberian National Fire Service will be graduating 328 officers who have undergone three months of intensive training. The Police, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation are also conducting trainings. Procurement plans are now being finalized for the bulk purchase of needed items prioritized under the disaggregated plan.

I would like to note at this juncture the Government of Liberia's appreciation for the work of the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the support of the partners in furtherance of the transition. However, the

Government is concerned about the slow pace of funding commitment or support for implementation of the plan. There is as yet no funding commitment to close the $60 million gap for this fiscal year. It is imperative to give new impetus to resource mobilization initiatives in support of Liberia as foreseen in the statement of mutual commitments with the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Secretary-General has expressed concern about the about the recent surge in violent public disturbances and has linked this surge to deficiencies in the response capacity of the national police, public discontent, alienation and slow pace of reconciliation. However, the violence alluded to represents isolated incidents which relate to motorcyclists and few concession areas. It needs to be taken in context. The essence of any Government is to maintain peace and stability of the body politic, protect human rights and promote the economic and social development of its people. No responsible Government can condone lawlessness, criminality and direct challenges to its constituted authority. As the number of motorbikes in Liberia has increased exponentially, the challenges to the Government have also increased. Working closely with the unions, the Government has now instituted new measures, including limiting the use of motorbikes to certain communities, mandatory registration of all motorbikes, and training and licensing of bike operators, which have considerably decreased motorcycle-associated violence over the past five months.

The violence in the concession areas is related to unresolved employer-employee issues and disagreements among the communities' leadership in the negotiation process on the granting of additional land beyond that covered under concession agreements. To each incident of violence, however, the Liberia National Police responded and restored control. Where human rights violations by the police have been alleged, the accused are investigated and brought to justice if they are found to be culpable.

With respect to the Secretary-General's observations of public discontent, alienation and slow pace of reconciliation, it is the Government's view that through its ongoing programmes in areas such as access to justice, infrastructure development, including an improved road network that facilitates the movement of people and commerce, and the decentralization of governance, it is in fact promoting reconciliation and addressing alienation and discontent.

Both Mr. Ladsous and the PBC Chair have commented on the situation in Liberia and the challenges that we face. We thank them for their perspectives. However, some significant developments have not been fully covered. First, the initial reactions to the proposed amendment to declare Liberia a Christian State, which caused divisions along religious lines during the constitutional review process, as noted in paragraph 10 of the report, have all been quietened, as the parties realized that it was just a proposal subject to the approval of the Legislature and a referendum.

The Constitution Review Committee has now completed its task and submitted 25 recommendations to the President, who transmitted them to the national legislature along with her comments. Some of the key recommendations advanced relate to dual nationality, ownership of land, and reduction of the terms of the President, Senators and members of the House of Representatives. These recommendations, if approved, will be subject to referendum, which will take place concurrent with the 2017 general elections.

While it is true that corruption continues to dominate public attention, as reported in paragraph 14 of the report, some progress continues to be noted. The Government obtained indictments and prosecuted a number of high profile cases including the National Oil Company of Liberia case, the case of the illegal issuance of logging permits involving officials of the Forestry Development Authority, and the case involving the National Drug Service. As I noted in my most recent statement to the Council (see S/PV.7438), in response to the twenty-ninth report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/275), capacity and resource constraints still pose a threat to the fight against corruption. The Ministry of Justice has restructured the Prosecutorial Department and created five new divisions, one of which is focused on anti-corruption litigation, exclusively handling cases referred to the Ministry by Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and the General Auditing Commission. The Government of Liberia remains committed to the fight against corruption and calls upon its partners to help strengthen the investigative and prosecutorial capacity of the Ministry of Justice.

On regional issues, the Government has made diplomatic representations to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire regarding the cross-border movement and activities of Ivoirians and Burkinabés. With general and presidential elections slated for October in Côte d'Ivoire, and with more than 38,000 registered Ivorian

refugees still within the proximity of the border, it is imperative, and the Government has taken steps to ensure, that the borders be routinely monitored with a view to taking actions to avoid conflict along this corridor. We welcome the joint aerial reconnaissance initiative by the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and UNMIL in that regard.

On the human rights front, it is important to underscore that no country is free from human rights violations. The insatiable yearning of the people of Liberia for respect of their rights, grounded by our historical commitment to make Liberia a beacon of hope and freedom, makes it very difficult for any Government in Liberia to engage in any persistent patterns of violations of human rights. Therefore, Liberia is making progress. We have intensified efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence, rape and pretrial detentions. Following our participation in the second round of the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva in May, Liberia will be returning to Geneva on 24 September to react to the recommendations put forward by the Human Rights Council. Liberia has complied with its reporting obligations under several human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Liberia remains committed to enhancing the work of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights.

In conclusion, when the Council mandated the Government of Liberia to formulate a plan to assume full responsibility over the security architecture of the country by June 2016, the Government entertained the hope that the financial requirements for the implementation of the plan would not be left to Liberia alone, especially given the steep decline in the economy due to the Ebola crisis. The Secretary-General's report buttresses this hope when, in welcoming the progress made in Liberia, it states that

> "challenges remain that will require additional assistance on all fronts in order to complete the transition by 30 June 2016 in line with the expectation of the Security Council." (*S/2015/620, para. 72*)

The Government and the people of Liberia therefore call upon the Security Council to leverage its position to mobilize international support for the implementation of the transition plan. We also look forward to forging increased engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission to fully consolidate peace in Liberia. The support of Council members will facilitate Liberia turning the corner from conflict to a future of sustained peace.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.